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A1-UUU885/64

The Plant Journal (1997) 11(6), 1195–1206

## Efficient gene targeting in the moss *Physcomitrella patens*

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P.D. 1997

p. 1195-1206 = 8

### Summary

The moss *Physcomitrella patens* is used as a genetic model system to study plant development, taking advantage of the fact that the haploid gametophyte dominates in its life cycle. Transformation experiments designed to target three single-copy genomic loci were performed to determine the efficiency of gene targeting in this plant. Mean transformation rates were 10-fold higher with the targeting vectors and molecular evidence for the integration of exogenous DNA into each targeted locus by homologous recombination is provided. The efficiency of gene targeting determined in these experiments is above 90%, which is in the range of that observed in yeast and several orders of magnitude higher than previous reports of gene targeting in plants. Thus, gene knock-out and allele replacement approaches are directly accessible to study plant development in the moss *Physcomitrella patens*. Moreover, efficient gene targeting has so far only been observed in lower eukaryotes such as protozoa, yeasts and filamentous fungi, and, as shown here the first example from the plant kingdom is a haplobiontic moss. This suggests a possible correlation between efficient gene targeting and haplophase in eukaryotes.

### Introduction

In most eukaryotes, genetic transformation is achieved following the integration of foreign DNA sequences by illegitimate recombination at random locations on the genome. However, the presence of isogenic genomic sequences on the introduced DNA can target it to its own chromosomal locus and facilitate integration by homologous recombination, a process known as gene targeting. Initially observed in *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* (Hinnen et al., 1978), this event is a prerequisite to application of the most sophisticated tools of reverse genetics, i.e. gene disruption and allele replacement (Berg, 1991). With such approaches, virtually any cloned gene, even of unknown function, can be specifically mutagenized *in vitro* and re-

introduced to its own chromosomal location in order to study its function (Capicci, 1989b; Struhl, 1983).

The successful application of allele replacement is dependent on the ratio of homologous to illegitimate recombination events during integrative transformation, and this ratio is extremely variable among different eukaryotes. So far, a targeting efficiency above 10% has only been observed in lower eukaryotes such as yeasts (Grimm and Kohli, 1988; Struhl, 1983), some filamentous fungi (Fotheringham and Holloman, 1989; Kronstad et al., 1989; Paietta and Marzluf, 1985; Shiotani and Tsuge, 1995; Timberlake and Marshall, 1989), *Dictyostelium discoideum* (De Lozanne and Spudich, 1987), Trypanosomatidae (Cruz and Beverley, 1990; ten Asbroek et al., 1990), and in a chicken lymphocyte B cell line (Buerstedde and Takeda, 1991). In most other eukaryotes tested, the ratio of targeted to random integration events falls to very low levels, ranging from  $10^{-2}$  to  $10^{-5}$  in mammalian cells (Bollag et al., 1989) and from  $10^{-3}$  to  $10^{-6}$  in plant protoplasts (Oh et al., 1994). Thus, although allele replacement is a well-established routine in *S. cerevisiae*, where exogenous DNA integrates into the genome almost exclusively by homologous recombination (Rothstein, 1991), it is not directly accessible in animals and plants, since the gene-targeted mutant has to be identified among the large number of transgenics generated by illegitimate recombination. This problem has been circumvented in animal systems with the use of mouse embryonic stem cells (ES cells) which display a higher gene targeting efficiency than other mammalian cells ( $10^{-1}$  to  $10^{-3}$ ) (Thomas et al., 1988) and which can be pre-screened in culture for gene targeting events prior to their re-introduction into mouse embryos (Capicci, 1989a; Joyner, 1991). However, although several reports have clearly demonstrated the feasibility of gene targeting in plants following both *Agrobacterium*- and polyethyleneglycol-mediated (PEG) gene transfer (Halfter et al., 1992; Lee et al., 1990; Miao and Lam, 1995; Offringa et al., 1990; Paszkowski et al., 1988), the ratio of targeted to illegitimate integration has so far been too low to allow the development of allele replacement approaches (Hrouda and Paszkowski, 1994; Lichtenstein and Barrena, 1993; Puchta et al., 1994).

The potential use of bryophytes as a model genetic system to study plant development was already recognized in the 1930s (von Wettstein, 1932), and is associated with (a) the facilitated genetic analyses resulting from the predominance of the haplophase in the life cycle (Cove, 1983), (b) the similar responses of mosses and higher plants to environmental and growth factors (Bopp and Werner, 1993; Cove and Ashton, 1984; Hartmann and Jenkins, 1984; Knight et al., 1995), and (c) the simple

Received 26 November 1996; revised 27 January 1997; accepted 4 February 1997.

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morphology of the plant, allowing cellular and developmental processes to be followed at the level of individual cells (Wang and Cove, 1989). Since the first report of successful isolation of biochemical and developmental mutants in the moss *Physcomitrella patens* (Engel, 1968), this plant has been used as a model genetic system for physiological and developmental studies (Cove, 1992; Cove and Knight, 1993). We have previously shown that genetic transformation of *P. patens* following PEG-mediated direct DNA transfer into protoplasts is feasible (Schaefer et al., 1991). This transformation by plasmids that do not contain sequences homologous to the moss genome is accomplished by illegitimate integration of several direct repeats of the plasmid at independent single genomic loci (Schaefer, 1994). We have also presented phenotypic and genetic data strongly suggesting that the integration of exogenous DNA sharing sequence homology with moss artificial loci occurs preferentially by homologous recombination (Schaefer, 1994; Schaefer et al., 1994), and similar results have been obtained independently (Kammerer and Cove, 1996). We report here experiments designed to target three independent single-copy genomic loci of the moss *P. patens*. Our results provide phenotypic, genetic and molecular evidence demonstrating for the first time in a plant that exogenous DNA sequences integrate in the genome predominantly at targeted locations by homologous recombination. The efficiency of gene targeting detected in these experiments is above 90%, which corresponds to the efficiency observed in lower eukaryotes such as yeasts. The development of gene knock-out and allele replacement approaches to study plant biology in the haploblastic moss *Physcomitrella patens* is therefore feasible.

## Results

### Experimental strategy

Since the natural variability of different genetic regions affects targeting efficiency, we have performed targeting experiments at three independent single-copy genomic loci to assess the efficiency of gene targeting in *P. patens*. Therefore, three fragments of moss DNA corresponding to single-copy genomic sequences were isolated from independent lambda genomic clones ( $\lambda$ 108,  $\lambda$ 420, shown in Figure 1;  $\lambda$ 213, not shown; D. Schaefer, unpublished data), and these fragments were subcloned into plasmid pGL2 (35S-hygro') (Bilang et al., 1991) or pH23b (35S-neo') (Pazkowsky et al., 1988) to give rise to the targeting plasmids pGL-108 (Figure 1), pGL-420 (Figure 1) and pH213 (not shown). Sequence homology between these constructs and the moss genome extends over 3.8 kb in pGL-108, 2.7 kb in pGL-420 and 2.3 kb in pH213. We have transformed wild-type protoplasts with these constructs,

and have selected and analysed stable hygromycin- or kanamycin-resistant transgenic plants (further designated as integrative transformants, see Schaefer et al., 1994) to assess the efficiency of gene targeting to single-copy genomic loci.

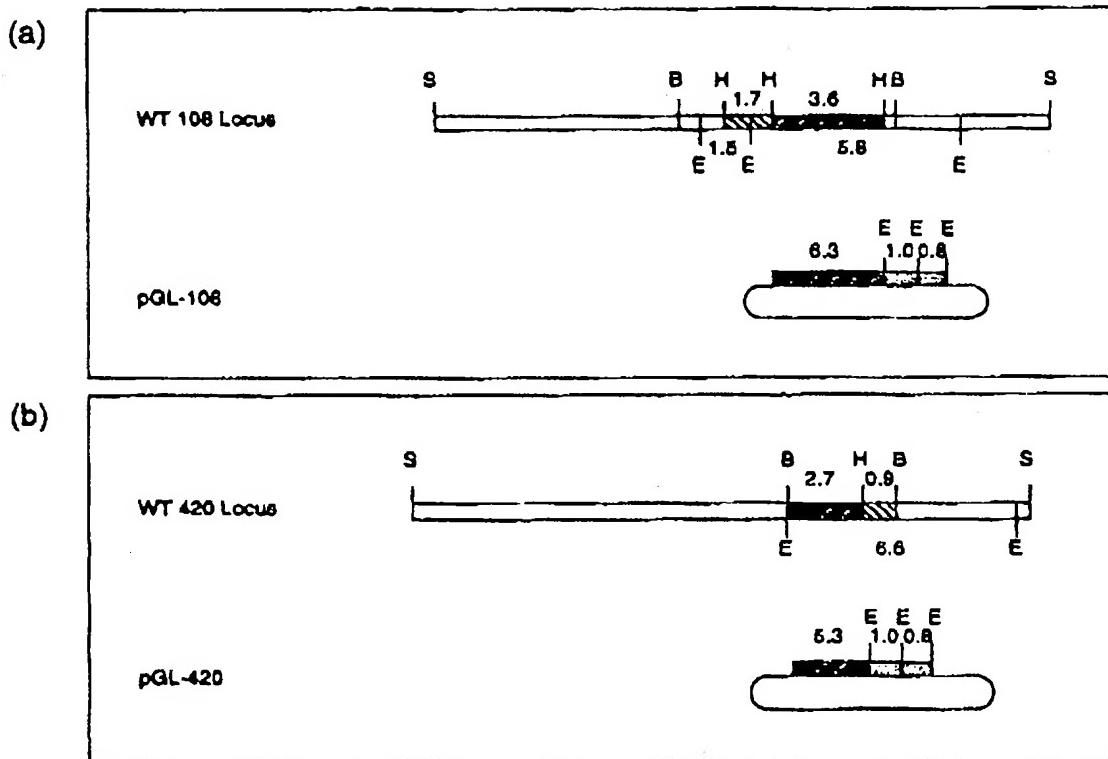
### Transformation frequencies

In wild-type *P. patens*, illegitimate integration of the non-homologous supercoiled plasmids pH23b and pGL2 in the genome occurs at a mean relative transformation frequency (RTF) of 1 in  $10^5$  surviving plants (Table 1), corresponding to 0.05 integrative transformants per  $\mu\text{g}$  DNA (Schaefer, 1994). The RTF of the wild-type with the targeting constructs ranges from 5 to 22 integrative transformants in  $10^5$  surviving plants (Table 1), corresponding to 0.3 to 2 transformants per  $\mu\text{g}$  DNA, and the highest transformation frequency achieved with plasmid pGL-108 is in the same range as insertion frequencies in *S. cerevisiae* (Struhl, 1983). Higher transformation rates with exogenous DNA sharing sequence homology with chromosomal DNA suggest efficient integration by homologous recombination, since efficient gene targeting is associated with higher transformation rates in yeasts (Grimm and Kohli, 1988; Hinnen et al., 1978). Additionally, the mean transformation frequencies observed in these experiments are approximately 1 order of magnitude higher with homologous vectors, providing an estimation of the efficiency of gene targeting in *P. patens* in the range of 90%.

### Phenotypic and genetic analyses

Phenotypic and genetic criteria demonstrating integrative transformation in plants include mitotic stability, meiotic stability and Mendelian segregation of the new character (Potrykus, 1991). Unrestricted growth and differentiation on selective medium, transmission of the antibiotic resistance to the leafy gametophores, and maintenance of the resistance after non-selective growth, which indicate mitotic stability of the new character in integrative transformants of *P. patens* (Knight, 1994; Schaefer et al., 1991, 1994), have been detected in more than 90% of the 130 transformants described here.

The progeny resulting from self-fertilization (designated selfed progeny) of 10 plants obtained with the targeting constructs (three plants obtained with pGL-108, three with pGL-420 and four with pH213) were analysed and 100% transmission of the antibiotic resistance was observed in each case (data not shown). The same plants were crossed with the strain *nicB5ylo6* (Ashton and Cove, 1977), and the segregation of the independent yellow marker of *nicB5ylo6* and of the antibiotic resistance markers was analysed. The yellow marker segregates in a 1:1 ratio and independently of the antibiotic markers in the 10 F<sub>1</sub> progeny tested (data



**Figure 1.** Partial restriction maps of the wild-type genomic locus λ108 (a) and λ420 (b) and of the transforming plasmids pGL-108 (a) and pGL-420 (b). The white boxes represent the moss genomic loci, the black hatched boxes the targeting fragments cloned in pGL2 (HindIII 3.6 kb for locus 108 and HindIII-BglII 2.7 kb for locus 420, probes G) and the white hatched boxes the flanking genomic fragments used as junction-specific probes (HindIII 1.7 kb for locus 108 and HindIII-BglII 0.9 kb for locus 420, probes J). The grey boxes represent the 35S-aphIV cassette coding for hygromycin-resistance and the thin lines the pUC sequences of pGL2 (probe P). The size of the fragments generated upon EcoRI digestion of the wild-type loci and of the transforming plasmids are given in kb. Restriction sites are for *Sph*I (S), *Bgl*II (B), *Hind*III (H) and *Eco*RI (E).

**Table 1.** Integration of vectors containing *P. patens* single-copy genomic sequences at higher rates than their non-homologous equivalent

Plasmid (size in kb) <sup>a</sup>	Number of experiments <sup>b</sup>	Regenerating plants ( $\times 10^3$ )	Transgenic plants	RTF per $10^5$ plants <sup>c</sup>	RTF per $10^{12}$ molecules <sup>d</sup>
pHP23b (4.4 kb)	5	4.2	2	$0.4 \pm 0.5$	$0.13 \pm 0.16$
pHP-213 (6.7 kb)	7	5.3	24	$4.9 \pm 2.3$	$1.78 \pm 0.78$
pGL2 (4.5 kb)	4	2.8	10	$2.8 \pm 2.3$	$0.79 \pm 0.73$
pGL-108 (8.1 kb)	3	2.7	59	$21.5 \pm 2.0$	$11.57 \pm 5.70$
pGL-420 (7.2 kb)	5	4.0	32	$8.2 \pm 1.4$	$3.14 \pm 0.91$

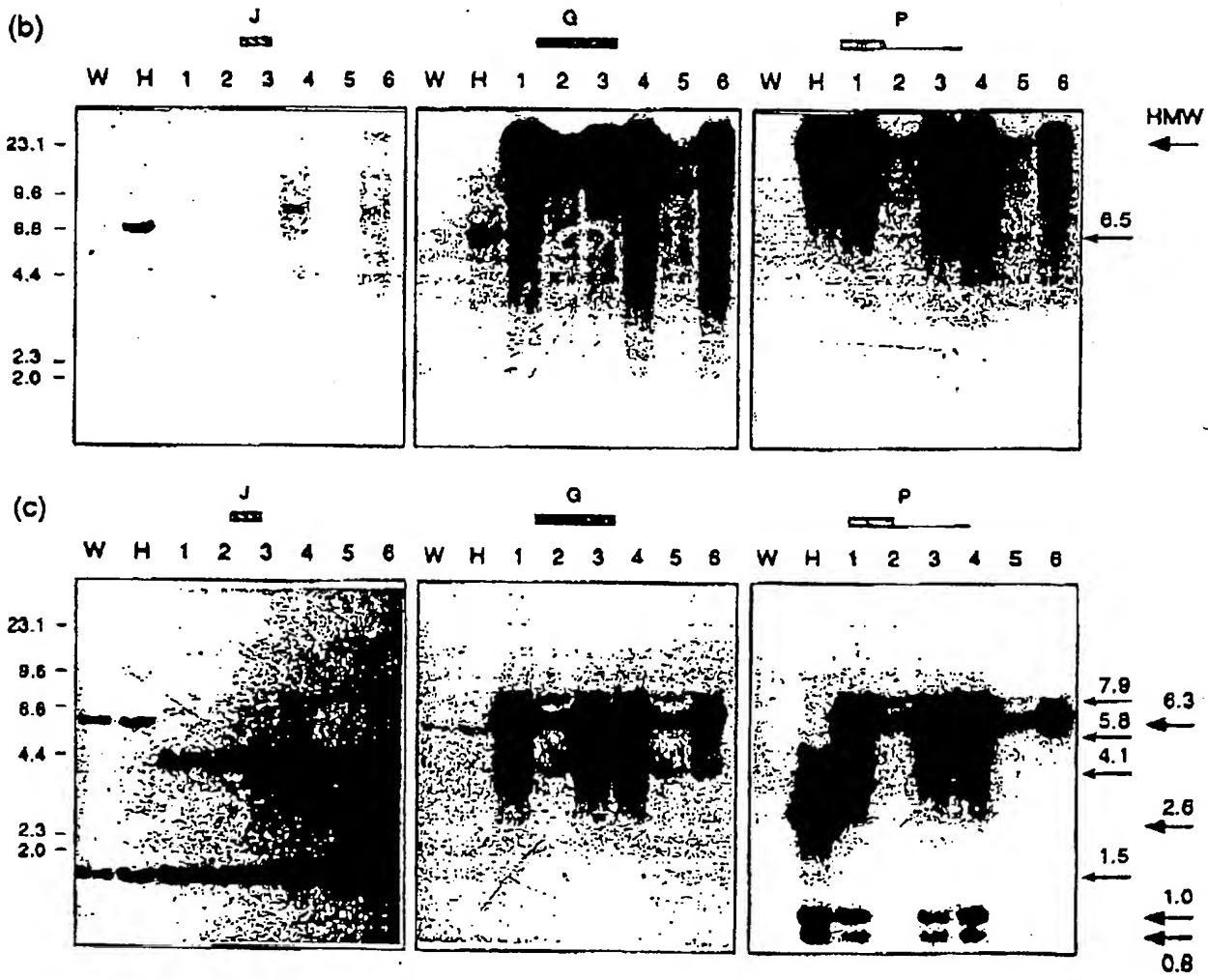
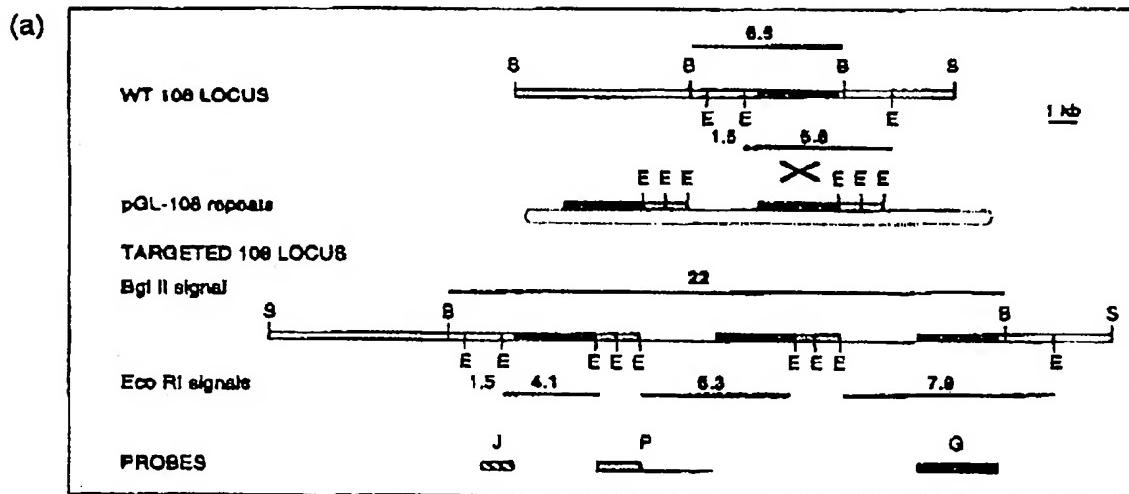
<sup>a</sup> Plasmids pHP23b and pGL2 do not share any homologous sequences with the *P. patens* genome. The targeting plasmids pHP-213, pGL-108 and pGL-420 each contain a single-copy moss genomic sequence.

<sup>b</sup> Each experiment was performed with 15 µg of supercoiled plasmid and the data summarized were obtained with three independent batches of protoplasts.

<sup>c,d</sup> Relative transformation frequencies (RTF) are expressed as c the number of transgenic plants obtained in  $10^5$  regenerating plants, and as d the number of transgenic plants obtained per  $10^{12}$  plasmid molecules to account for the different sizes of the plasmids (both as mean value  $\pm$  standard deviation).

not shown). A 1:1 segregation of the antibiotic resistance in the F<sub>1</sub> progeny was scored in nine plants, whereas the F<sub>1</sub> offspring of the last plant (strain pH-213 #7) were 100% sensitive to the antibiotic (data not shown). These data provide genetic evidence for meiotic stability of the anti-

biotic resistance and for single-locus insertion of the targeting plasmids in 9/10 plants. In the case of strain HP-213 #7, we postulate, as observed in *S. cerevisiae* (Struhl, 1983), that the loss of resistance in this F<sub>1</sub>-offspring results from meiotic recombination events leading to the deletion



of plasmid sequences and to the restoration of the wild-type locus in both alleles.

#### Molecular analysis

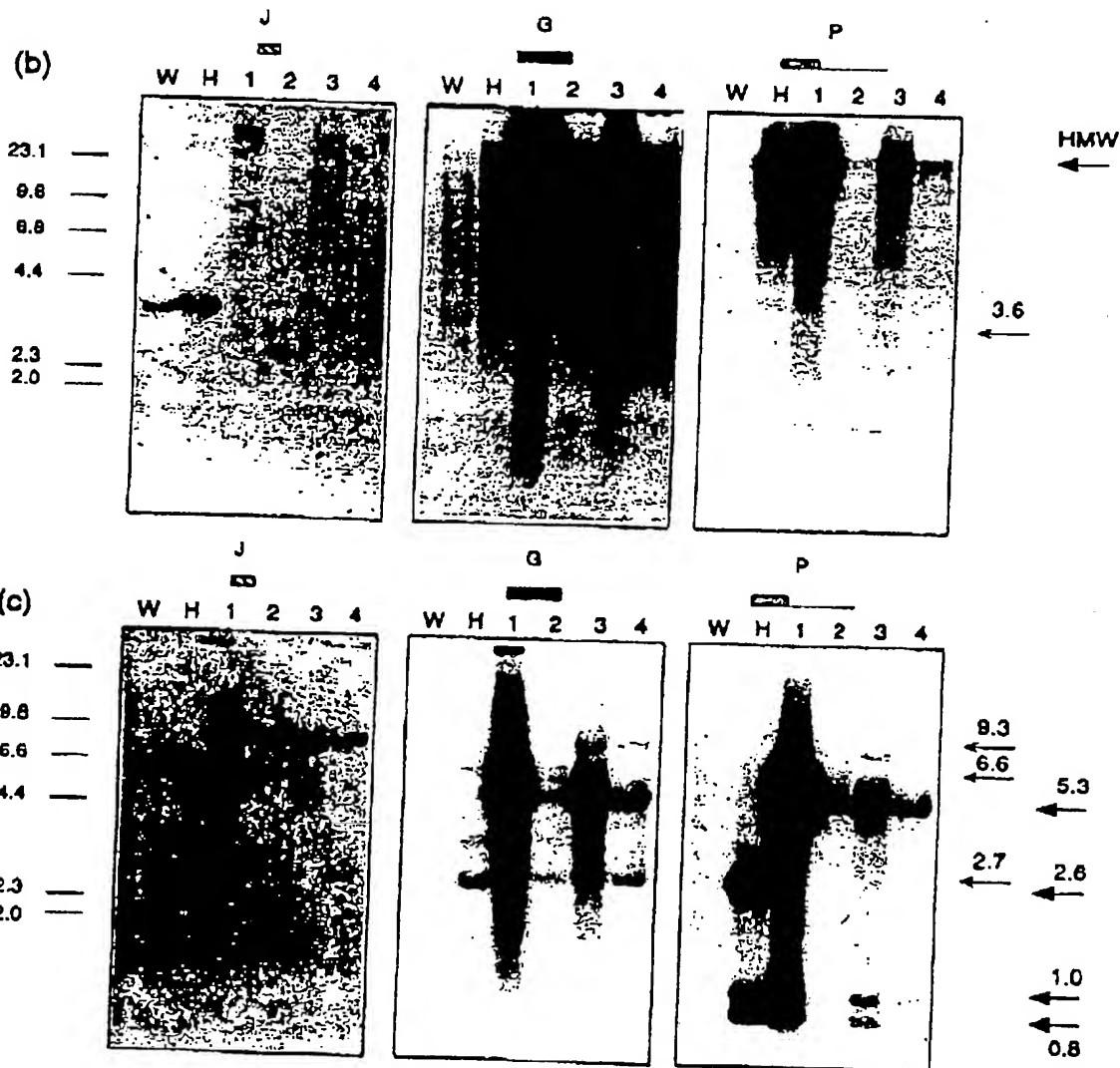
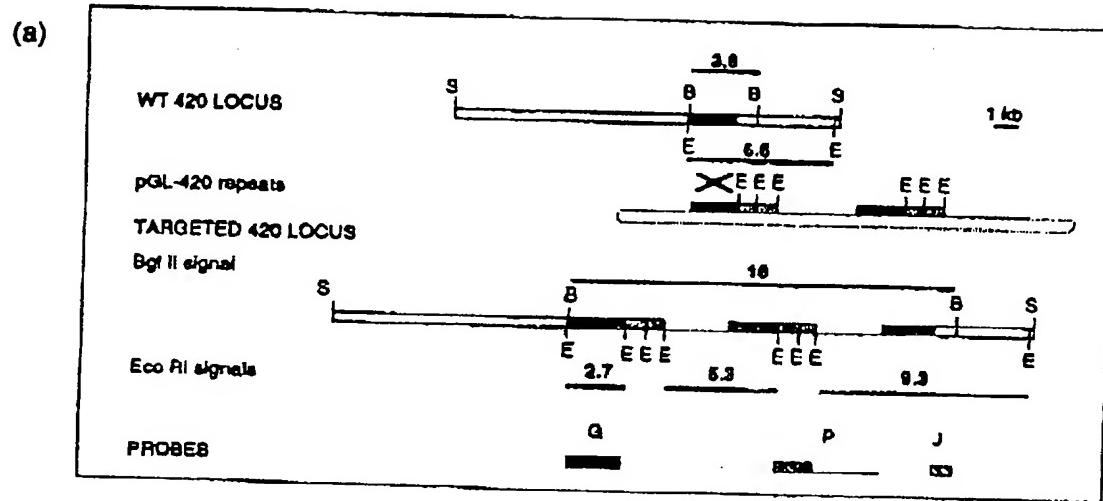
To demonstrate insertion of the targeting plasmid by homologous recombination, disruption of the wild-type targeted sequence associated with the generation of two new hybrid junctions of predicted size and hybridization specificity was assessed by Southern blot analysis. The predicted structure of targeted locus 108 is shown in Figure 2(a), and the analysis of DNA extracted from six randomly chosen independent transformants obtained with plasmid pGL-108 and digested by *Bg*II or EcoRI in Figure 2(b) and (c), respectively. Insertion of several direct repeats of pGL-108 in the 108 wild-type locus by a single reciprocal cross-over is fully supported in the six plants analysed. In *Bg*II-digested DNA (Figure 2b), the wild-type 6.5 kb band is detected in the wild-type and the hygromycin-resistant plants, but is replaced by a high-molecular-weight signal of single-copy intensity when the *Hind*III 1.7 kb junction-specific probe is used (detected after over-exposure of the membrane, data not shown), and of multi-copy intensity upon hybridization with the 3.6 kb targeting fragment or with the plasmid probe. In EcoRI digested DNAs (Figure 2c), use of the genomic probe (G) reveals that the wild-type 5.8 kb band is present in the two control plants, and is replaced by two new fragments of 7.9 and 4.1 kb as predicted. The 4.1 kb junction is detected by the junction probe, as well as a flanking 1.5 kb band which is present in all plants, showing that the sequences flanking the target site have not been altered. Both junctions are detected by the targeting fragment, demonstrating that two copies of this fragment now flank the integration site, whereas the plasmid probe only detects the 7.9 kb junction. These results are totally consistent with the predictions and demonstrate integration of pGL-108 into the 108 locus by a single reciprocal cross-over in the six plants analysed. Furthermore, the use of the plasmid probe (P) reveals the presence of the 6.3, 1.0 and 0.8 kb bands of multi-copy intensity, demonstrating that several direct repeats of pGL-108 have been integrated in locus 108. Comparison of the intensity of the signals with determined amount of the probes (genomic reconstruction

not shown) indicates that the number of integrated repeats varies in independent transformants, ranging from five in plants 2 and 5, to 10 in plant 6, and up to 20 in plants 1, 3 and 4.

A similar analysis was performed on DNA extracted from four independent transformants obtained with pGL-420 (Figure 3). Integration of several direct repeats of plasmid pGL-420 in the 420 wild-type locus by a single reciprocal cross-over is again fully supported in the four plants analysed, by (a) the replacement of the *Bg*II 3.6 kb wild-type band by a high-molecular-weight signal (Figure 3b), (b) the disruption of the wild-type EcoRI 8.6 kb band associated with the generation of two predicted new junctions of 2.7 and 9.3 kb displaying the expected hybridization specificity (Figure 3c), and (c) the presence of the 5.3, 1.0 and 0.8 kb bands generated by pGL-420 direct repeats (Figure 3d). The weak signal at 2.7 kb detected in lane H is most likely due to hybridization of plasmid repeats with a small amount of pUC sequences present in the purified junction probe. This is further supported by the presence of a 5.3 kb band in the DNA from the high-copy-number plant 1. This analysis also shows the presence of a minor band at 6.3 kb in plants 2 and 3, which is possibly generated by loss or methylation of one of the EcoRI sites located in the 35S hygromycin expression cassette in the integrated concatenate. The second minor band detected in DNA from plant 2, although displaying an electrophoretic mobility similar to the wild-type band, is also generated by partial digestion of the integrated repeats since the disruption of the wild-type locus is clearly demonstrated upon hybridization with the junction specific probe. Finally, genomic reconstruction indicates that between 5 and 50 direct repeats of pGL-420 are integrated at locus 420 in independent transformants (data not shown).

Similar results were obtained for four out of six plants obtained with plasmid pHIP-213 (data not shown). One plant displayed phenotypic signs of mitotic instability associated with very high copy number of the transforming plasmid, and was thus not analysed further. Integration of the plasmid by illegitimate recombination was recognized in the second one (data not shown). Therefore, these results demonstrate that several direct repeats of the targeting plasmids have inserted at their specific targets by a single

**Figure 2.** Southern blot analysis of genomic DNA extracted from plants obtained with plasmid pGL-108  
 (a) Predicted structure of targeted locus 108 following insertion by homologous recombination (single cross-over) of two direct repeats of plasmid pGL-108. Symbols are as described in Figure 1 and the dotted line represents the circular status of the transforming plasmid. Restriction sites are for *Sac*I (S), *Bg*II (B) and EcoRI (E). The wild-type and recombinant EcoRI and *Bg*II fragments are represented with thick lines and their molecular weight is given in kb. The three probes used in this analysis are also represented (J: junction probe, G: genomic probe, P: plasmid probe, described in Figure 1)  
 (b, c) Southern blot analysis of DNA extracted from plants obtained with pGL-108. DNA (2.5 µg) extracted from the wild-type strain (W), from a hygromycin-resistant transgenic plant obtained with pGL2 (M) and from six independent transgenic plants obtained with plasmid pGL-108 (1-6) were digested with *Bg*II (b) or EcoRI (c) and hybridized with a 1.7 kb *Hind*III fragment flanking the target sequence (probe J), with the 3.6 kb *Hind*III 108 targeting fragment (probe G), or with plasmid pGL2 sequences (probe P). The thin arrows indicate the wild-type band and the new hybrid junctions, the thick arrows the bands generated by direct repeats of the plasmid (sizes in kb).



reciprocal cross-over in all three loci examined and in the majority of plants analysed. The efficiency of gene targeting determined from these analyses is 100% of the tested target loci (3/3), and 93% of the tested plants (14/15). This estimation is consistent with the 10-fold increase in transformation rates observed with the targeting vectors.

#### Molecular analysis of the progeny

Southern blot analysis of DNA extracted from selfed, hygromycin-resistant and hygromycin-sensitive F<sub>1</sub> siblings of plants 108#3 and 108#5 was performed to correlate genetic and molecular data in the analysis of the progeny. Transmission of the new locus to selfed siblings, and restoration of the wild-type 5.8 kb EcoRI band in hygromycin-sensitive F<sub>1</sub> siblings is shown for both plants tested (Figure 4a and b). The new locus is also conserved in hygromycin-resistant F<sub>1</sub> siblings of the low-copy-number plant 108#5. However, we observed recombination events leading to a reduction in the number of integrated copies, to the loss of the new 7.9 kb junction fragment and to the restoration of the wild-type 5.8 kb band in the DNA from hygromycin-resistant F<sub>1</sub> siblings derived from the high-copy-number plant 108#3. Size difference between the artificial locus (150 kb, corresponding to 20 copies of pGL-108) and its wild-type allele (3.6 kb) may be responsible for these meiotic recombination events. In this case, we postulate that duplication, deletion by intramolecular homologous recombination and translocation might be involved in such recombination. Duplication is required to restore the wild-type locus and maintain the new 4.1 kb junction; deletion by intramolecular homologous recombination can account for the loss of plasmid direct repeats in the concatenate and translocation for the integration of the remaining repeats in another genomic location. However, these data establish a tight correlation between genetic and molecular analyses of the progeny of plants targeted at single-copy natural loci. Meiotic recombination events, leading to loss and/or rearrangements of integrated direct repeats have been observed in yeasts (Struhl, 1983). A similar mechanism may account for the meiotic recombination events observed in these analyses.

#### Discussion

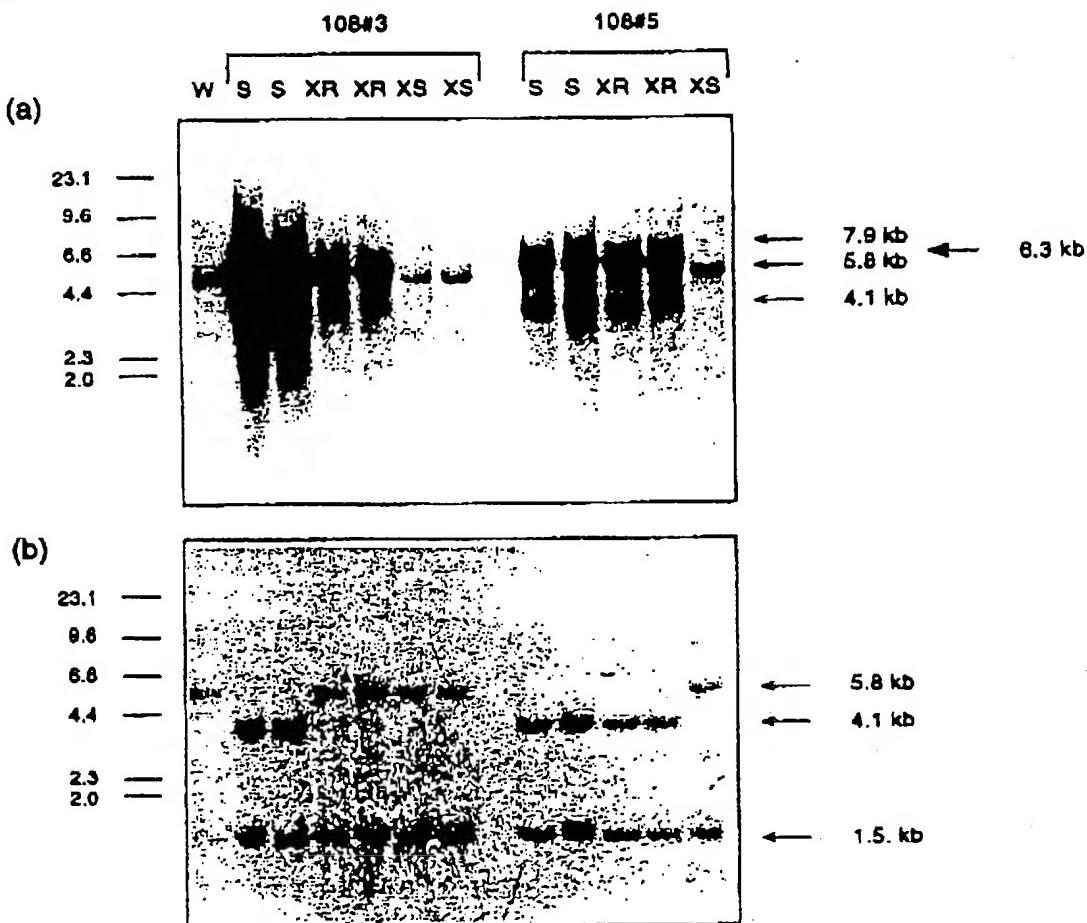
##### Targeting frequencies

We have performed experiments to assess the efficiency of gene targeting in the moss *P. patens*, and our data provide phenotypic, genetic and molecular evidence demonstrating successful and efficient gene targeting of the three single-copy natural loci tested. Transformation frequencies in targeting conditions ranged from 0.3 to 2 integrative transformants per µg DNA, with a mean value at least one order of magnitude higher than the frequencies of illegitimate integration (0.05 transformants per µg DNA). The highest transformation frequencies achieved in these experiments were in the range of 10<sup>-3</sup>, or about two clones per µg DNA. Such frequency corresponds to the rate of integrative transformation by homologous recombination in *S. cerevisiae* (Struhl, 1983), and to high frequencies of illegitimate integration following PEG-mediated DNA uptake in higher plant protoplasts (Negritti *et al.*, 1990).

The extent of sequence homology between the transforming DNA and the target has been shown to be essential for efficient gene targeting. Several hundred base pairs appear to be sufficient for gene targeting in *S. cerevisiae* (Rothstein, 1991), whereas several thousand base pairs are required to achieve gene targeting in mouse ES cells (Deng and Capecchi, 1992). In the experiments described here, sequence homology between the introduced plasmid and the target loci ranges from 2.3 to 3.6 kb, and the data indicate that such length is sufficient to promote efficient targeting to natural single-copy loci.

In yeast and ES cells, there is a correlation between targeting frequencies and the extent of sequence homology. In the experiments reported here, transformation frequencies may correlate with the extent of sequence homology present in the targeting vectors (Table 1). However, we consider that the different transformation frequencies observed with the targeting vectors instead reflect the natural variability of genomic regions, as already observed in *S. cerevisiae* (Rothstein, 1991), and further experiments are required to establish the relationship between the extent of sequence homology and targeting frequencies in *P. patens*. Interestingly, the difference observed between plasmid pGL-108 and pGL-420 may correlate with transcrip-

**Figure 3.** Southern Blot analysis of genomic DNA extracted from plants obtained with plasmid pGL-420  
 (a) Predicted structure of targeted locus 420 following insertion by homologous recombination of two direct repeats of plasmid pGL-420. Organization of the Figure, symbols and legends are as described in Figures 1 and 2.  
 (b, c) Southern blot analysis of DNA extracted from plants obtained with pGL-420. Organization of the figure, symbols and legends are as described in Figure 2. DNA (2.5 µg) extracted from the wild-type strain (W), from a hygromycin-resistant transgenic plant obtained with pGL2 (H) and from four independent transgenic plants obtained with plasmid pGL-420 (1–4) was analysed. The 0.8 kb HindIII-BglII fragment was used as junction probe J, and the 2.7 kb HindIII fragment of λ420 was used as genomic probe G (see Figure 1).



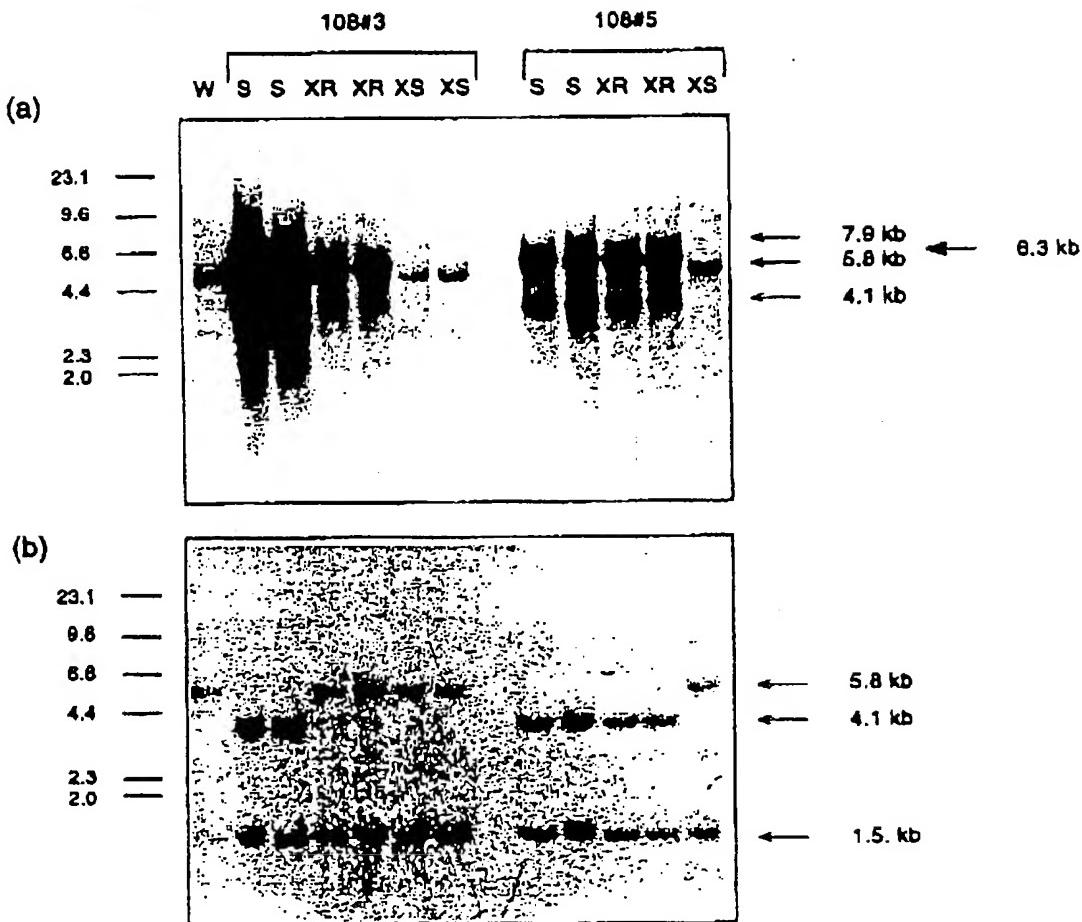
**Figure 4.** Southern blot analysis of genomic DNA extracted from the progeny of plants obtained with plasmid pGL-108. DNA (2.5 µg) from wild-type (W) and from selfed (S), hygromycin-resistant (XR) and hygromycin-sensitive (XS) F<sub>1</sub> siblings obtained from crosses of plants 108#3 and 108#5 with strain *nicB5y/6* (Ashton and Cove, 1977) was digested with EcoRI and hybridized with the 3.6 kb *Hind*III 108 genomic probe G (a) or with the 1.7 kb *Hind*III junction probe J (b). Symbols are as described in Figure 2.

tional activity, since a transcript is detected with the 3.6 kb 108 genomic fragment, but not with the 2.7 kb 420 fragment upon Northern hybridization of poly(A)<sup>+</sup> mRNA extracted from 10-day-old protonemal tissue (data not shown).

In yeast and mouse ES cells, gene targeting frequencies have been shown to be increased by the presence of double-strand breaks in the region of homology (Capacechi, 1989a; Orr-Weaver *et al.*, 1981). The experiments reported here were performed with supercoiled DNA. However, we have observed that transformation frequencies with pHG-213 were approximately five times higher following linearization in the region of homology, without altering the ratio of targeted to random integration events (data not shown). This suggests that a similar mechanism exists in *P. patens*, and work is in progress to address this question further.

#### Gene targeting efficiency

Two independent estimations of the efficiency of gene targeting in *P. patens* can be made from these data. Mean frequencies of integrative transformation observed under targeting conditions are 10-fold higher than those observed in the absence of sequence homology, indicating that DNA integration occurs 10 times more frequently by homologous recombination than by illegitimate integration. Molecular evidence for the integration of the transforming plasmids by homologous recombination has been obtained for the three analysed loci, and for 93% (14/15) of the plants. These estimations are similar to those obtained in targeting experiments with artificial loci, where phenotypic, genetic and molecular evidence for successful targeting was obtained for the six loci tested and for 91% (10/11) of the plants (Schaefer, 1994; unpublished data). The data



**Figure 4.** Southern blot analysis of genomic DNA extracted from the progeny of plants obtained with plasmid pGL-108. DNA (2.5 µg) from wild-type (W) and from selfed (S), hygromycin-resistant (XR) and hygromycin-sensitive (XS) F<sub>1</sub> siblings obtained from crosses of plants 108#3 and 108#5 with strain *nieB5ylo8* (Ashton and Cove, 1977) was digested with EcoRI and hybridized with the 3.6 kb HindIII 108 genomic probe G (a) or with the 1.7 kb HindIII junction probe J (b). Symbols are as described in Figure 2.

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from Ashton and Cove, 1977; Knight and Cove, 1988). Protoplasts were isolated from 6- to 8-day-old protonemal cultures by incubation for 30 min in 1% Driselase (Fluka 44585), 0.48 M mannitol (4 ml per Petri dish). The suspension was filtered through a 100 µm stainless steel sieve, left for 15 min at room temperature to complete digestion of the cell walls and filtered again through a 50 µm sieve. Protoplasts were sedimented by low-speed centrifugation (600 rpm for 5 min) and washed twice in 0.48 M mannitol (adapted from Grimsley et al., 1977; Knight et al., 1988).

#### Transformation and selection of transgenic clones

PEG-mediated direct DNA transfer into protoplasts was performed as described by Schaefer et al. (1994) and samples were kept for 16 h in darkness after transformation. Protoplasts were then harvested by low-speed centrifugation, embedded in a top layer (0.7% agar, 0.48 M mannitol) and regenerated for 6 days in the same conditions as plant material on solid culture medium supplemented with 0.33 M mannitol and overlaid with a cellophane disk. Selection for antibiotic-resistant colonies was initiated 6 days after transformation by transferring the top layer onto plates without mannitol and supplemented with 40 mg l<sup>-1</sup> genetin sulphate (Gibco) or 25 mg l<sup>-1</sup> hygromycin B (Calbiochem). Selection was maintained at a constant level by transferring the top layers onto fresh selective plates every 10 days. Integrative transgenic clones were identified by their unrestricted growth and isolated one month after the initiation of selection (see for details Knight, 1994; Schaefer, 1994; Schaefer et al., 1991, 1994).

#### Genetic crosses

Strain *nicB5ylo6* is self-sterile, cross-fertile and carries a convenient phenotypic yellow marker (*ylo*) allowing easy identification of the colony in crossing experiments (Ashton and Cove, 1977). Protonemal inocula of a transgenic strain and of strain *nicB5ylo6* were transferred side by side on solid medium containing nitrate as the sole nitrogen source and regenerated at 25°C until some 50 gametophores were completely differentiated. Cultures were then irrigated with sterile water and transferred to 17°C for 3 weeks to induce gametogenesis. The cultures were brought back to 26°C and the maturation of sporophytes was followed visually. Mature spore capsules were harvested individually, crushed in 1 ml sterile water to disperse the spores and kept for three weeks at 4°C to ensure high spore germination rates. Spore capsules collected from the transgenic colony were generated by self-fertilization and the ones collected from the *nicB5ylo6* colony by cross-fertilization. Spores were germinated in light on solid medium and replicates of well-defined single spore-derived colonies were tested for the segregation of the antibiotic resistance and of the *ylo* marker (adapted from Ashton and Cove, 1977; Knight and Cove, 1988).

#### Plasmid construction

DNA manipulations were performed according to standard procedures (Sambrook et al., 1989). A 3.6 kb *Hind*III fragment was isolated from the genomic clone *λ108* (D. Schaefer, unpublished results) and cloned into the *Hind*III site of pGL2 to build plasmid pGL-108. A 3.6 kb *Bgl*II fragment isolated from the genomic clone *λ420* (D. Schaefer, unpublished results) was subcloned in the *Bam*HI site of pBS-M13+ (Stratagene). A 2.7 kb *Hind*III fragment was recovered from this plasmid (one of the *Hind*III sites comes from the polylinker of pBS-M13+) and cloned into the corresponding

site of pGL2 to construct pGL-420. A 2.3 kb *Eco*RI fragment was isolated from the genomic clone *λ213* (D. Schaefer, unpublished results) and cloned into the *Eco*RI site located next to the 35S promoter of pH23b to build plasmid pH213. *E. coli* HB101 was used to transform and amplify the plasmids which were PEG-purified according to standard procedures (Sambrook et al., 1989).

#### Plant DNA analysis

Protonemal tissue was collected from 8- to 10-day-old culture, frozen in liquid nitrogen and ground in a coffee grinder with dry ice. DNA was extracted with cetyl-trimethyl-ammonium bromide according to Rogers and Bendich (1988), yielding 3–5 µg DNA per gram fresh weight. Southern blot analysis was performed according to standard methods (Sambrook et al., 1989). DNA (2.5 µg) was digested with the appropriate restriction enzyme, fragments were separated by electrophoresis in 0.7% agarose and transferred to nylon membranes (Zeta probe, BioRad) under alkaline conditions (0.4 M NaOH). Probes were radiolabelled with [ $\alpha$ -<sup>32</sup>P]dCTP by random priming (Feinberg and Vogelstein, 1983). Hybridization was conducted in 3 × SSPE, 0.1% SDS, 2 × Denhardt's, 100 µg ml<sup>-1</sup> yeast tRNA and 10<sup>6</sup> cpm ml<sup>-1</sup> radio-labelled probes for 16 h at 80°C. The final wash was in 0.1 × SSPE at 65°C. Genomic reconstructions were based on a haploid genome size of 4.8 × 10<sup>8</sup> bp (Reekl et al., 1994).

#### Acknowledgements

We acknowledge Iris Schmidt and Luis Ruiz de Castaneda for technical assistance, Dr Barbara Hohn (FMI, Basel) and Dr Enzo Russo (MPI, Berlin) for helpful suggestions throughout the course of this study, and Dr Susan Reynolds (LPC, UNILausanne) for critical reading of the manuscript. This work was funded by the OFES (Office fédéral pour l'éducation et la science), on behalf of the European Communities BIOTECH Program, as part of the EUROMOSS project of the Project of Technological Priority 1993–1998.

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